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Summary record of the 57th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 25 March 1998, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Ms. Daes (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Greece)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

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In the absence of Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh), Ms. Daes (Greece), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 119: Pattern of conferences (*continued*) (A/C.5/52/L.26)

1. **Mr. Ho** (Singapore), reporting on the informal consultations which had been held on the subject of official United Nations holidays, said that participants had considered five possible solutions. The first was to increase the total number of holidays to 10. The second, a proposal by the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management, was to grant an additional holiday and to offset it by adding an extra half hour to each of 16 working days per year. The third proposal was to replace an existing United Nations holiday by the Islamic holiday of Id al-Adha and the fourth to have eight fixed and one flexible holiday. The final proposal was to maintain the status quo.

2. Each proposal had received varying degrees of support, but it had not been possible to achieve consensus on any one of them. Some participants had wanted the Committee to give the Secretariat clear instructions on how to implement Assembly resolution 52/214 A, while others considered that it was for the Secretary-General to decide in the matter. It had finally been concluded that the coordinator of the consultations should report to the Committee that consensus could not be achieved.

3. He had been asked by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to reiterate that delegation's earlier request for an informal meeting to be scheduled during the current part of the resumed session of the General Assembly to consider the issues of the translation of documents relating to the standardization of geographical names and of the translation and issuance of press releases.

Draft decision A/C.5/52/L.26

4. **Mr. Atiyanto** (Indonesia), introducing draft decision A/C.5/52/L.26 on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 52/214, section A, paragraphs 5 and 6 on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the General Assembly would decide that the United Nations official holidays should be set at ten days in order to observe the two holidays of Id al-Fitr and Id al-Adha at the United Nations Headquarters and other United Nations duty stations. The draft text was based on the firm belief of the 132 States members of the Group of 77 and China that Id al-Fitr and Id al-Adha should be fully observed as official United Nations holidays in compliance with Assembly resolution 52/214 A. He therefore hoped that the text could be adopted by consensus.

5. **The Chairman** said that the Committee would take a decision on the draft text at a later meeting.

Other matters

6. **Mr. Atiyanto** (Indonesia), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, expressed the hope that, in preparing the Committee's programme of work, the Bureau would allot sufficient time for the consideration of procurement reform under agenda item 114 so as to permit the coordinator of that topic to complete his work.

7. **Mr. Sulaiman** (Syrian Arab Republic) expressed his delegation's support for the suggestion made by the representative of Indonesia, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, that more time should be allowed for consideration of procurement reform. Referring to the representative of Singapore's comment about an informal meeting to consider the translation of documents relating to the standardization of geographical names and the translation of press releases, he hoped that the Bureau would give appropriate consideration to those issues. His delegation would submit a proposal in that connection in due course.

8. **Mr. Sial** (Pakistan) asked what action had been taken by the Secretary-General to implement the provisions of paragraphs 24 and 25 of General Assembly resolution 52/214 B.

9. **Mr. Odaga-Jalomayo** (Uganda) reiterated his earlier request to the Secretariat for information on the number of posts at the D-2 and higher levels that had existed in 1996 and the current number of such posts broken down by nationality and gender.

10. **Mr. Elmontaser** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) expressed his delegation's support for the Syrian representative's remarks on the translation of documents relating to the standardization of geographical names and other documents into the official languages. He hoped that adequate time would be allocated for consideration of the matter in informal consultations.

11. **Ms. Silot Bravo** (Cuba) asked for sufficient time to be allotted in the Committee's programme of work for the consideration, under agenda item 119, of measures to ensure the necessary resources for the upgrading of conference rooms and interpretation booths.

12. **Mr. Medina** (Morocco) said that his delegation had found increasingly of late that it was receiving communications from the Secretariat in English. Upon advising the Departments concerned, unofficially, that it

would prefer to receive them in Arabic or French, it had been informed that that would not be possible, as there were not enough staff members with the necessary skills to translate the communications in question. His delegation wished to ask the Secretariat why that was so, and why the report of the Phase IV Working Group on Reimbursement of Contingent-owned Equipment had not yet been issued.

13. **Mr. Farid** (Saudi Arabia) repeated his delegation's earlier request for information on the number of staff whose posts had been transferred from the regular budget to the support account and the number of posts occupied by nationals of developing countries which had been abolished.

14. **Mr. Perfiliev** (Officer-in-Charge, Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services), replying to the question concerning the implementation of paragraphs 24 and 25 of resolution 52/214 B, said that appropriate instructions had been given to the Editorial Control Unit, which had been enforcing the provisions of the resolution. Focal points for documentation had been set up in all substantive departments and regular meetings of the focal points were held to coordinate efforts aimed at ensuring that all documents were issued on time.

15. **Ms. Letrot** (France) said that she shared the concerns expressed by the representative of Morocco about correspondence being received from the Secretariat in English. She also wished to point out that her delegation had not yet received the French version of the report of the Phase IV Working Group on Reimbursement of Contingent-owned Equipment.

16. **Mr. Farid** (Saudi Arabia) wondered whether the representative of the Secretariat could shed light on the action taken by his Department in situations where there was a failure to implement resolutions of the General Assembly.

17. **Mr. Perfiliev** (Officer-in-Charge, Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services) assured the representatives of Morocco and France that his Department always honoured requests for the translation of documents to be transmitted to Permanent Missions. It was possible, however, that requests might not have been made for the translation of some documents.

18. With regard to the implementation of General Assembly resolutions, the Department which he represented did its utmost to discharge its own responsibilities in a timely manner and to alert other substantive departments to their responsibilities by issuing implementation memorandums. It was for those departments, however, to then implement the assembly's mandates.

The meeting rose at 10.45 a.m.